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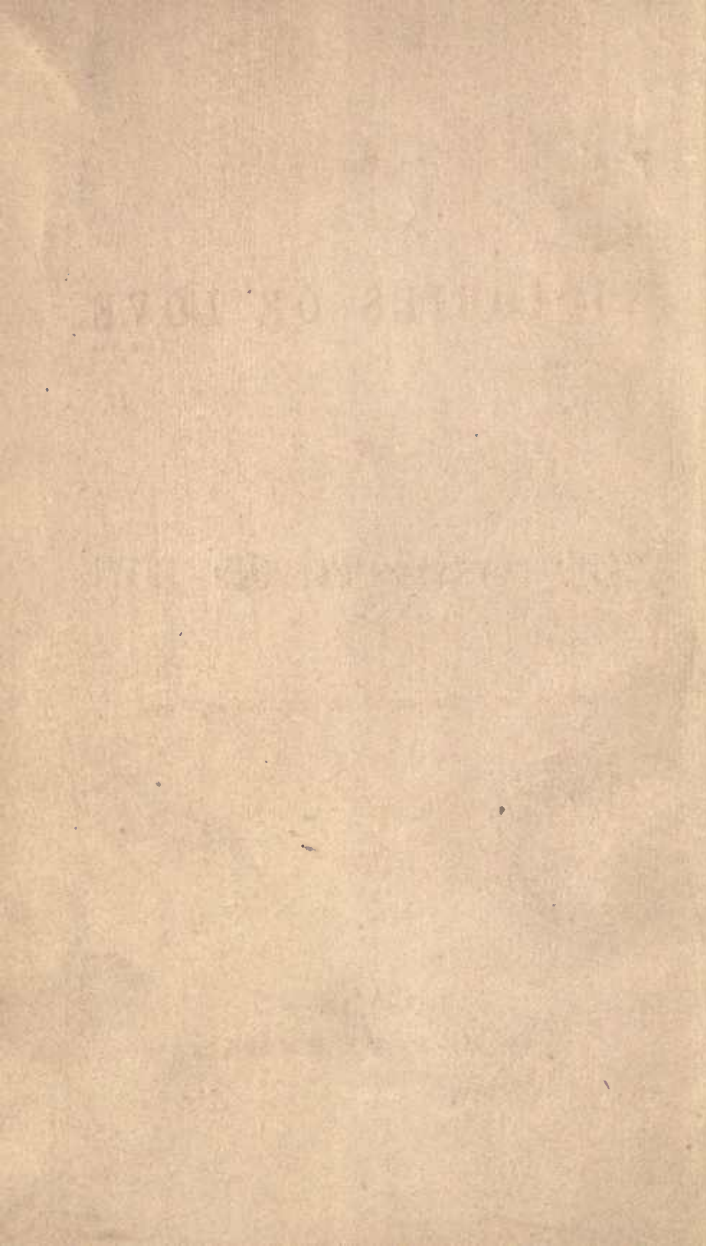
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THE VICTORIES OF LOVE.



THE
VICTORIES OF LOVE.

BY
COVENTRY PATMORE.

AUTHOR OF "THE ANGEL OF THE HOUSE," ETC.

BOSTON:
T. O. H. P. BURNHAM.
1862.

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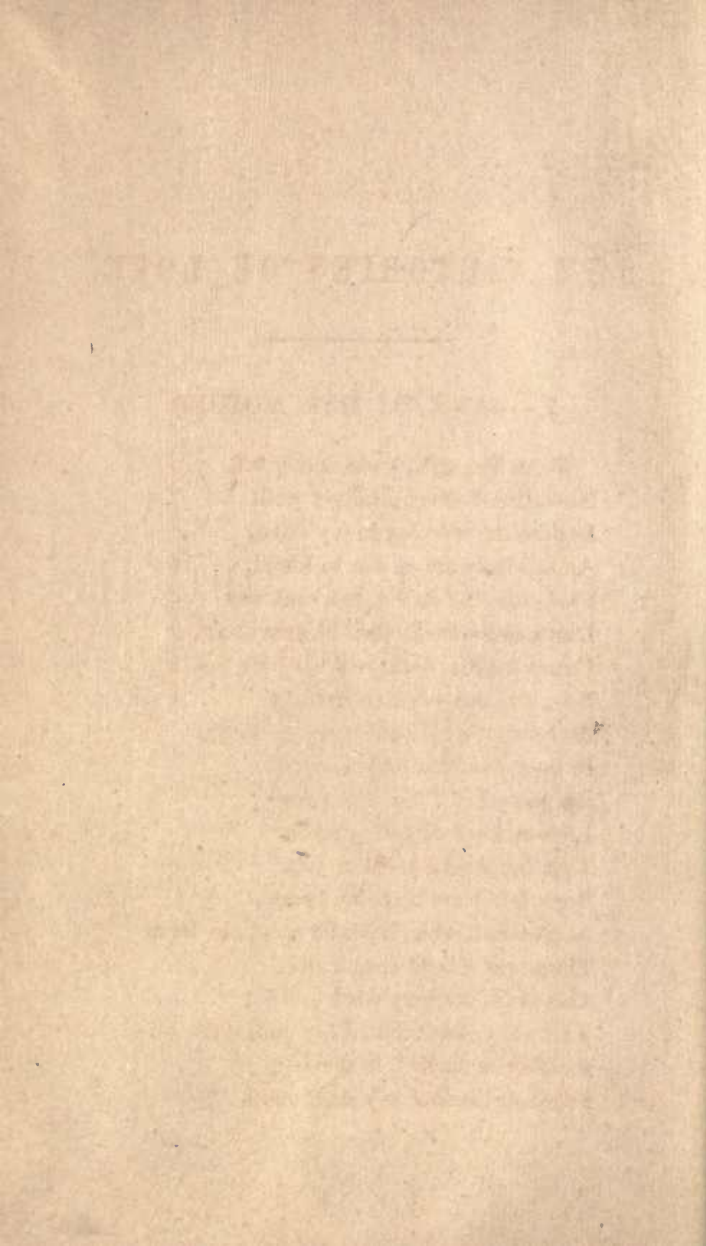
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JANE TO HER MOTHER.

TO HER



THE VICTORIES OF LOVE.

I.—JANE TO HER MOTHER.

DEAR MOTHER, I can surely tell,
Now, that I never shall get well.
Besides the warning in my mind,
All suddenly are grown so kind!
Fred stops the doctor, too, each day
Down stairs, and, when he goes away,
Comes smiling back, and sits with me,
Pale, and conversing cheerfully
About the spring, and how my cough,
In finer weather, will leave off.
But yesterday I told him plain
I felt no hope of spring again.
Then he, after a word of jest,
Burst into tears upon my breast,
And owned, when he could speak, he knew
There was a little danger, too.
This made me very weak and ill,
And while, last night, I lay quite still,
And, as he fancied, in the deep
Exhausted rest of my short sleep,

I saw him kneel, and heard him pray,
“O Father, take her not away!
Let not life’s dear assurance lapse
Into death’s agonized ‘Perhaps;’
A hope without thy sanction, where
Less than assurance is despair!
Give me some sign, if go she must,
That death’s not worse than dust to dust;
Not heaven, on whose oblivious shore,
Joy I may have, but her no more!
The bitterest cross, it seems to me,
Of all, is infidelity;
And so, if I may choose, I’ll miss
The kind of heaven which comes to this!
If doomed, indeed, this fever ceased,
To die out wholly, like a beast,
Forgetting all life’s ill success
In dark and peaceful nothingness,
I could but say, Thy will be done;
For, being thus, I am but one
Of seed innumerable, which ne’er
In all the worlds shall bloom or bear.
I’ve put life past to so poor use
Well mayst Thou life to come refuse,
And justice, which the spirit contents,
Shall still in me all vain laments;
Nay, pleased, I’ll think, while yet I live,
That Thou my forfeit joy mayst give

To some fresh life, else unelect,
And heaven not feel my poor defect !
Only let not Thy method be
To make that life, and call it me ;
Still less to sever mine in twain,
And tell each half to live again,
And count itself the whole ! To die,
Is it love's disintegrity ?
Answer me, ' No,' and I, with grace,
Will life's brief desolation face ;
My ways, as native to the clime,
Adjusting to the wintry time,
Even with a patient cheer thereof."

He started up, hearing me cough.
O mother, now my last doubt's gone !
He likes me *more* than Mrs. Vaughan ;
And death, which takes me from his side,
Shows me, in very deed, his bride !

Thank God, the burdens on the heart
Are not half known till they depart !
Although I prayed, for many a year,
To love with love that casts out fear,
His very kindness frightened me,
And heaven seemed less far off than he.
For what could such a man discern
In such a wife ? 'Tis hard to learn
How little God requires of us ;
And with my Frederick erred I thus.

And woman's love to man burns dim,
Unless she thinks she's loved by him.

Yet greater love, we read, has none
Than he who for his friend lays down
His life, as Fred did, nursing me
Through many an illness ; nay, as he
Did daily, working all the day
That I and mine might eat and play.
Yet could I see no love in this,
Nor feel the kindness of his kiss ;
And in the darkness would I trace
His cousin, Mrs. Vaughan's sweet face,
And laugh, that made all love mere debt,
Till sick with envy and regret.
That Fred might love the more for nought
Was far beyond my selfish thought,
And how my feebleness might be,
To him, what Baby's was to me.

I prayed and prayed ; but God's wise way,
I find, is still to let me pray
For a better heart, until I'm tired ;
And when, indeed, the change desired
Comes, lest I give myself the praise,
It comes by Providence, not Grace ;
And still my thanks for granted prayers
Are groans at unexpected cares.
First, Baby went to heaven, you know,
And, five weeks after, Grace went too.

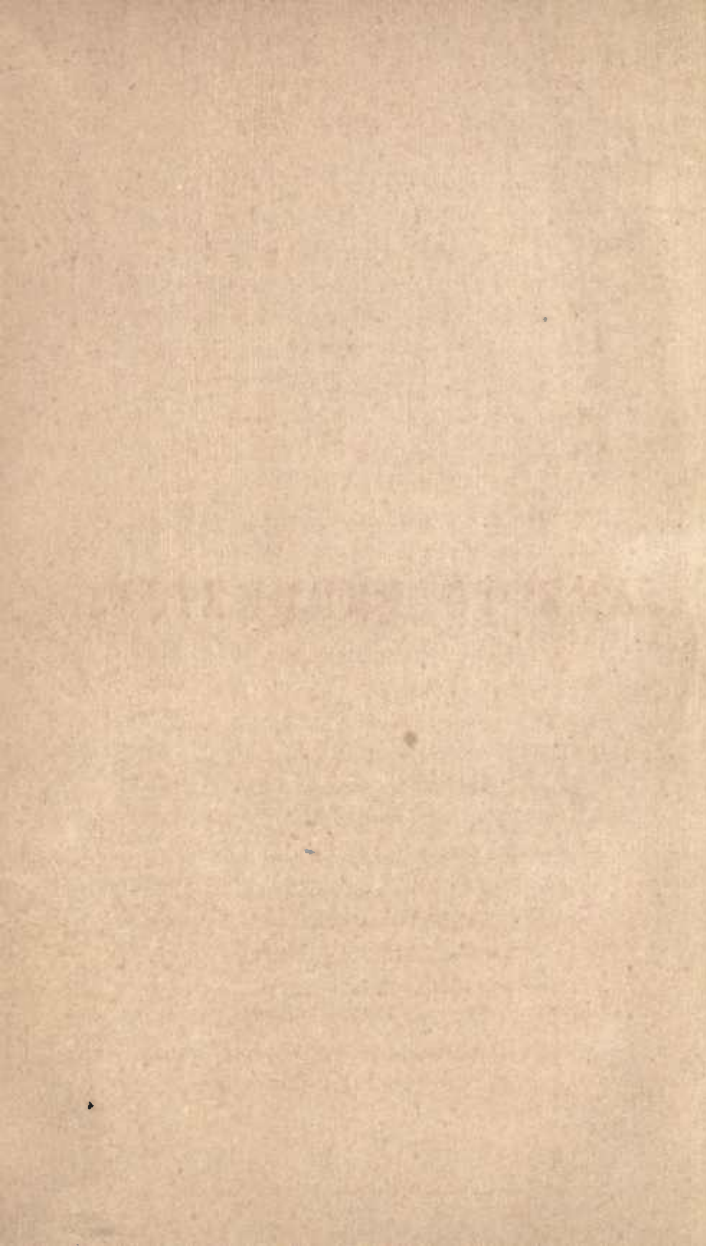
To hide the gap left by the dead,
I strove to get more near to Fred ;
And he became more talkative,
And, stooping to my heart, would give
Signs of his love which touched me more
Than all the proofs he gave before ;
And in that time of our great grief
We talked religion for relief ;
And thenceforth many a Scripture text
Helped me, which had till then perplexed.
O, what a wondrous word seemed this :
He is my head, as Christ is his !
None surely could have dared to see
In marriage such a dignity
For man, and for his wife still less
Such happy, happy lowliness,
Had God himself not made it plain !
This revelation lays the rein,
If I may speak so, on the neck
Of a wife's love, takes thence the check
Of conscience, and forbids to doubt
Its measure is to be without
All measure, and a right excess
Is here her rule of godliness !
To think of how this doctrine meets
My lot, is still the sweet of sweets.
I took him not for love, but fright ;
He did but ask a dreadful right.

In this was love, that he loved me
The first, who was mere poverty.
All that I know of love he taught ;
And love is all I know of aught.
My merit is so small by his
That my demerit is my bliss ;
Yet, for the sake of only love,
And that his gift, does he approve
His wife entirely, as the Lord
The Church his Bride, whom thus the Word
Calls Black but Comely, Precious, Sweet,
Fair, Pleasant, Holy, yea, Complete,
When really she was no such thing !
But God knew well what he could bring
From nought, and he, her Beauty's cause
Saw it, and praised it, ere it was.
So did, so does my lord, my friend,
On whom for all things I depend ;
Whose I am wholly, rather who
I am, so am in all things new ;
My Love, my Life, My Reverence, yes,
And, in some sort, my Righteousness !
For wisdom does in him so shine,
My conscience seems more his than mine.
My life is hid with him in Christ,
Never thencefrom to be enticed ;
And in his strength have I such rest
As when the baby on my breast

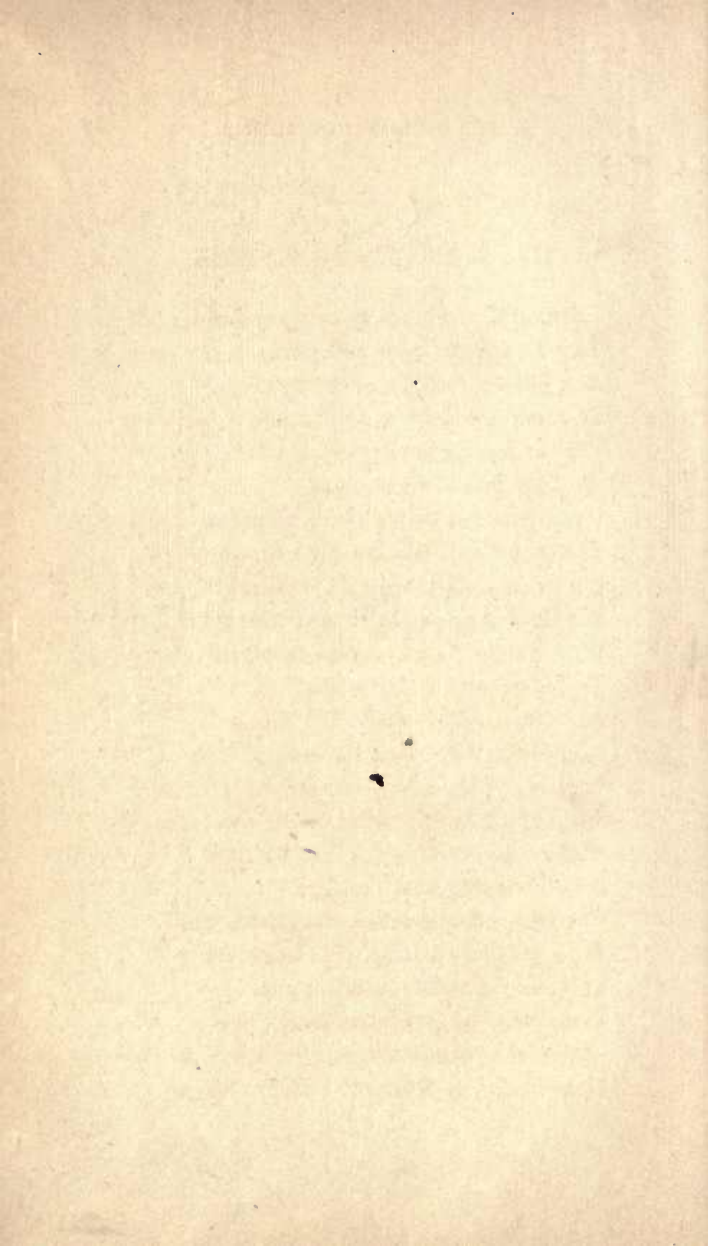
Finds what it knows not how to seek,
And, very happy, very weak,
Lies, only knowing all is well,
Pillowed on kindness palpable.

O, this unspeakable delight
Of owing a debt that's infinite!
And yet, if possible, more sweet
The folly, vanity, conceit,
Astonishment, and mystery
That he delights no less in me!

Till now, I saw no hope above
This sweet contentment. Yet my love
Dared never ask, "In the other life,
Dear, would you choose me for your wife?"
But death now comes indeed to bring
The bondage of the wedding-ring.
And who can tell what's yet in store
In heaven, where narrow bonds are more
Narrow, if that's their present bliss,
And life's an image still of this,
But such a strange and glorious one
As is the rainbow of the sun!



JANE TO FREDERICK.



II.—JANE TO FREDERICK.

I HEARD you praying once, my Love,
That I might be your wife above ;
And this I've written to be read
To comfort you when I am dead.
I cry so I can scarcely write
To fancy you alone at night,
When darkness seems so full of death
That you can hardly get your breath,
Imploring God, perhaps in vain,
For proof that you shall have me again.
When Grace died I was too perplexed
To call to mind a single text ;
And when, a little while before,
I found her sobbing on the floor,
Because I told her that in heaven
She would be as the angels even,
And would not want her doll, 'tis true
A horrible fear within me grew
That, since the preciousness of love
Went thus for nothing, mine might prove
To be no more, and heaven's bliss
Some dreadful good which is not this.

But being about to die makes clear
Many dark things, and I've no fear,

Now, that my love, my grief, my joy
Is but a passion for a toy.

I cannot speak at all, I find,
The shining something in my mind
That shows so much that, if I took
My thoughts all down, 'twould be a book.
God's Word, which lately seemed above
The simpleness of human love,
To my death-sharpened hearing tells
Of little or of nothing else,
And many thoughts I wished were true,
When first they came like songs from you,
Now rise with power beyond the reach
Of doubt, and I to you can teach,
As if with felt authority
And as things seen, what you taught me.

Yet how? I have no words but those
Which every one already knows:
As, "No man hath at any time
Seen God, but 'tis the love of Him
Made perfect, and He dwells in us,
If we each other love." Or thus:
"My goodness misseth in extent
Of Thee, Lord! In the excellent
I know Thee; and the Saints on Earth
Are all my love and holy mirth."
And further: "Inasmuch as ye
Did it to one of these, to Me

Ye did it, though ye nothing thought
Nor knew of Me, in that ye wrought.”

Thus, dear, the love of you and me
Is love to God and charity
To all men. O, I love you so,
I love all other, friend and foe,
And will, perforce, all kinds of good
To all in need and neighborhood !
What shall I dread ? Will God undo
This bond, which is all others too !
And when I meet you will you say,
To my reclaiming looks, “ Away !
A dearer love is in my arms,
With higher rights and holier charms ;
The children whom thou here mayst see,
‘ Neighbors ’ that mingle thee and me,
And gayly on impartial lyres
Renounce the foolish filial fires
They felt, with ‘ Praise to God on High,
Good-will to all else equally ; ’
The trials, duties, service, tears ;
The many fond, confiding years
Of nearness sweet with thee apart ;
The joy of body, mind, and heart ;
The love that grew a reckless growth,
Unmindful that the marriage-oath
To love in an eternal style
Meant, only for a little while ;

Severed are now these bonds earth-wrought ;
All love, not new, stands here for nought !”

Why, it seems almost wicked, dear,
Even to fancy such a fear !
Are we not “ heirs,” as man and wife,
“ Together of eternal life ?”
Was Paradise e’er meant to fade,
To make which marriage first was made ?
Neither beneath him nor above
Could man in Eden find his Love ;
Yet with him in the garden walked
His God, and with him mildly talked !
Shall the humble preference offend,
In heaven, which God did there commend ?
Are “ honorable and undefiled ”
The names of things from heaven exiled ?
And are we not forbid to grieve
As without hope ? Does God deceive,
And call that hope which is despair,
Namely, the life we should not share ?
Image and glory of the man,
As he of God, is woman. Can
This holy, sweet proportion die
Into a dull equality ?
And shall I, feeble, have to face
The heaven’s unsufferable blaze,
Without your arms to hide me and hold,
Whilst you declare it, gazing bold ?

Are we not one flesh, yea, so far
 More than the babe and mother are,
 That sons are bid mothers to leave,
 And to their wives alone to cleave,
 "For they two are one flesh"? But 'tis
 In the flesh we rise! Our union is,
 The Bible says, "great mystery."
 Great mockery, it appears to me,
 Poor image of the spousal bond
 Of Christ and Church, if loosed beyond
 This life! 'Gainst which, and much more yet,
 There's not a single text to set.
 The speech to the scoffing Sadducee
 Is not in point to you and me.
 For "Who," you know, "could teach such clods
 That Cæsar's things were also God's"?
 The sort of wife the Law could make
 Might well be "hated" for Love's sake,
 And left, like money, land, or house;
 For out of Christ is no true spouse.

I used to think it strange of Him
 To make love's after-life so dim,
 Or only clear by inference!
 But God trusts much to common-sense,
 And only tells us what, without
 His Word, we could not have found out.
 On fleshly tables of the heart
 He penned truth's feeling counterpart

In hopes that come to all ; so, dear,
Trust these, and be of happy cheer,
Nor think that he who has loved well
Is of all men most miserable.

There's much more yet I want to say,
But cannot now. You know my way
Of feeling strong from twelve till two,
After my wine. I'll write to you
Daily some words, which you shall have
To break the silence of the grave.
Good-by! Be sure, dear, heaven's King
From prayer "withholdeth *no* good thing."

JANE TO FREDERICK.

III. — JANE TO FREDERICK.

I'VE been for days distressed in mind
With thoughts of all that you may find,
When I am gone, to grieve about :
But if you have it written out
That this, my own death's burden, too,
Was one I sharply felt with you,
The anguish of the loneliness
Of unshared sorrow will be less.

You'll think, perhaps, " She did not know
How much I loved her ! " Dear, I do !
And so you'll say, " Of this new awe
Of heart which makes her fancies law,
This sensitive advertency
To the least that memory can descry,
These watchful duties of despair,
She does not dream, she cannot care ! "
Now, Fred, you see how false that is,
Or how could I have written this ?
And, should it come into your mind
That, now and then, you were unkind,
You never, never were at all !
Remember that ! It's natural
For such as Mr. Vaughan to come,
From a morning's useful pastime, home,

And, having had his lounge at ease,
To go down stairs, disposed to please,
And greet, with such a courteous zest,
His handsome wife, still newly dressed,
As if the Bird of Paradise
Should daily change her plumage thrice !
He's always well, she's always gay.
Of course ! But he who toils all day,
And comes home hungry, tired, or cold,
And feels 'twould do him good to scold
His wife a little, let him trust
Her love, and boldly be unjust,
And not care till she cries ! How prove
In any other way his love,
Till soothed in mind by meat and rest ?
If, after that, she's well caressed,
And told how good she is, to bear
His humor, fortune makes it fair.
Women like men to be like men,
That is, at least, just now and then !
And, so, I've nothing to forgive
But those first years, (how could I live !)
When, though I really did behave
So stupidly, you never gave
One unkind word or look at all.
As if I was some animal
You pitied ! Now, in later life,
You've used me like a proper wife,

And dropped, at last, all vain pretence
Of what's impossible to sense,
Which is, to feel, in every mood,
That if a woman's kind and good,
A child of God, a living soul,
She's not so different, on the whole,
From her who has a little more
Of God's best gifts. And, O, be sure,
My dear, dear Love, to take no blame
Because you could not feel the same
Towards me, living, as when dead.
A starving man must needs think bread
So sweet! and, only at their rise
And setting, blessings, to the eyes,
Like the sun's course, grow visible.
And, if you're dull, remember well,
Against delusions of despair,
That memory sees things as they were,
And not as they were misenjoyed,
And would be, still, if aught destroyed
The glory of their hopelessness;
So that, in fact, you had me less
In days, when necessary zeal
For my perfection made you feel
My faults the most, than now your love
Forgets but where it can approve.
You gain by loss, if that seemed small,
Possessed, which, being gone, turns all

Surviving good to vanity.

O Fred, this makes it sweet to die !

Say to yourself, " 'Tis comfort yet
I made her that which I regret ;
And parting might have come to pass
In a worse season. As it was,
Love an eternal temper took,
Dipped, glowing, in Death's icy brook !"
Or else, " On her poor, feeble head
This might have fallen. 'Tis mine instead !
And so great evil sets me free,
Henceforward, from calamity !
And, in her little children, too,
How much for her I still can do !"
And grieve not for these orphans even,
For central to the love of Heaven
Is each child, as each star to space.
This truth my dying love has grace
To trust with a so sure content,
I fear I seem indifferent !

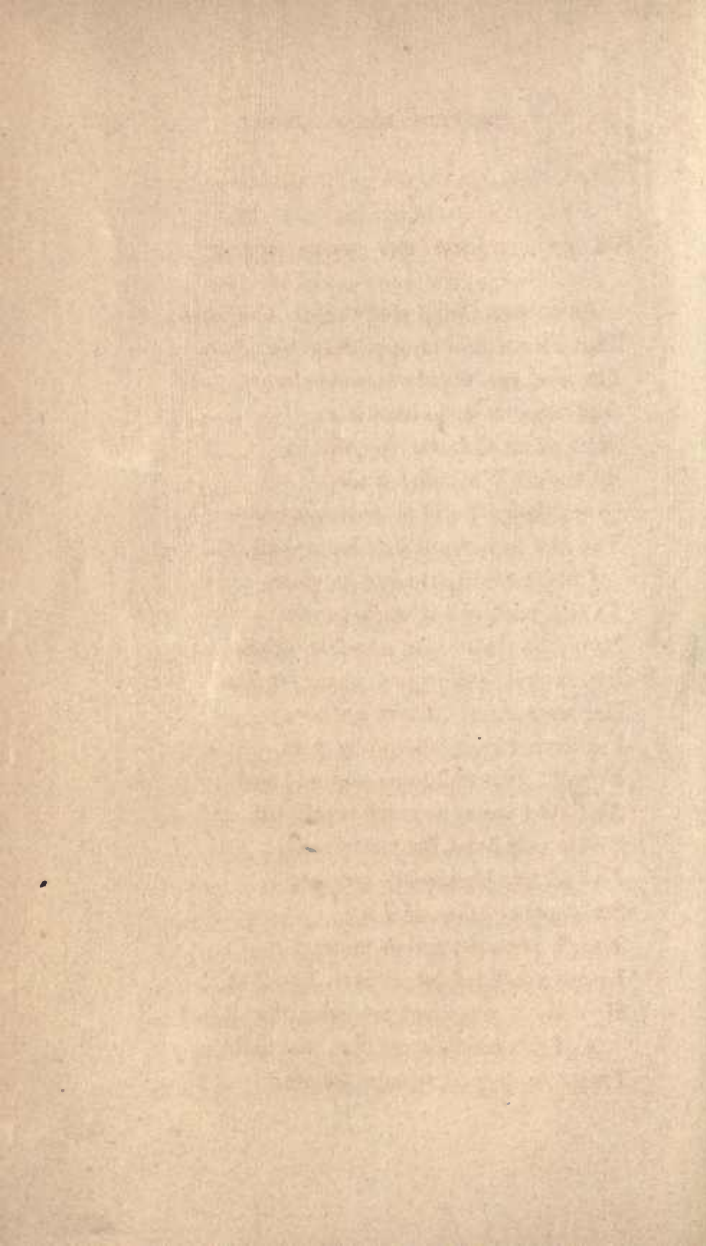
You must not think a child's small heart
Cold, because it and grief soon part.
Fanny will keep them all away,
And you'll not hear them laugh and play
Until the funeral's over. Then,
I hope, you'll be yourself again,
And glad with all your soul to find
How God thus to the sharpest wind

Suits the shorn lambs. Instruct them, dear,
For my sake, in His love and fear.
Show how, until their journey's done,
Not to be weary they must run ;
And warn them 'gainst the blasphemy
That Heaven makes sin necessity.
No fig-leaves hide that shame from God
Which kills love's root within the sod !

Don't try to dissipate your grief
By any lightness. True relief
Of sorrow is by sorrow brought.
And yet, for sorrow's sake, you ought
To grieve with measure. Do not spend
So good a power to no good end !
Would you, indeed, have memory stay
In the heart, lock up and put away
Relics and likenesses and all
Musings, which waste what they recall.
True comfort, and the only thing
To soothe without diminishing
A prized regret, is to match here,
By a strict life, God's love severe.
Yet, after all, by nature's course,
Feeling must lose its edge and force.
Again you'll reach the desert tracts
Where only sin or duty acts.
But, if love always lit our path,
Where were the trial of our faith ?

And, should the mournful honeymoon
Of death be over strangely soon,
And life-long resolutions made
In grievous haste, as quickly fade,
Seeming the truth of grief to mock,
O, think, Fred, 'tis not by the clock
That sorrow goes! A month of tears
Is more than many, many years
Of common time. Shun, if you can,
However, any passionate plan.
Grieve with the heart. Let not the head
Grieve on, when grief of heart is dead;
For all the powers of life defy
A superstitious constancy.
The only bond I hold you to
Is that which nothing can undo.
A man is not a young man twice;
And if, of his young years, he lies
A faithful score in one wife's breast,
She need not mind who has the rest.
Yet, ah, love seems too sacred! But
Life has some knots which life must cut;
And courses, having reason strong,
And not by any known law wrong,
May trust themselves that they are right,
At last, in Heaven's most tender light.
In this do what you will, dear Love,
And feel quite sure that I approve.

And, should it chance as it may be,
Give her my wedding-ring from me ;
And never dream that you can err
Towards me by being good to her ;
Nor let remorseful love destroy
In you the kindly, flowering joy
And pleasure of the natural life
'Tis right to feel towards a wife.
But, dearest, should you ever be
Inclined to think your love of me
All fancy, since it drew its breath
So much more sweetly after death,
Remember that I never did
A single thing you once forbid ;
All poor folks loved me, and, at the end,
Even Mrs. Vaughan wrote — “ Dearest Friend ! ”



IV.—JANE TO FREDERICK.

FREDERICK, from many signs, I've drawn
That John is thinking of Miss Vaughan.
I'm sure, too, that her parents know,
And are content to have it so,
Seeing how rich our Boy will be
By uncle's Will; and Emily
(Sweet baby!) will of course approve
The first fine youth they let make love.

I never could get courage, dear,
To tell you this; it was too near
My heart. My own, own Frederick,
I know you used, when young, to like
Her mother so! I love her too,
For having been beloved by you.
Now, in your children, you will wed.
And John seems *so* much comforted
By his new hope, for losing me!
And all this happiness, you see,
Somehow or other, if I try
To talk about it, makes me cry.
I hope you'll tell sweet Mrs. Vaughan
How much you loved me, when I'm gone!

And this reminds me that, last night,
I went to sleep in strange delight,

And dreamed I was in heaven—mere dreams,
Yet, to my sickly thought, it seems
To have been true vision! Things not true,
As once you showed me, often do
To make true things conceivable:
So what I saw I'll try to tell.

Imaged in heaven's crystal floor,
I saw myself, myself no more.
In such a shape henceforth I dwelt
That love me most of all I felt
You must! Though others, to my view,
Were lovelier, yet the love of you,
I found, was all the loveliness
Which there 'twas given you to possess
Or wish for. So, besides the glow
Of God, the same on every brow,
Like me the angelic women were
Each with a private beauty fair,
Which was a lovely mystery
To all, but one who had the key.
Our marriage-ropes, that round us shook,
Were love on which the eyes could look,
On which, too, from seven bows in heaven,
Whereof the hues were seven times seven,
And always shifting, fell such light
As made the expressions infinite
In those bright veils; for brief above,
As here, was every joy of love.

A lady came and gazed on me,
And laughed, and sang, "Glad will he be!"
And one, "Love, here at last achieved,
Not only is, but is perceived!"
And one, who beckoned me apart,
Pressed me against her angel's heart,
And said, "'Tis mine to guard his wife
From strangeness till he comes to life."

Most like to earth's was heaven's good;
Most different was the gratitude!
I saw the rose, and felt the breeze,
And laughed, and sang for bliss of these;
And every thing on every part
Was, O, such pleasure in the heart!
The nearness of the Lord I knew
By mild recurrent glows that grew
Within the breast and died away,
And marked the change of night and day.
But this was wonderful, that, when
The day was fullest, all the men
Seemed women, and the women were
Beautiful babies, whom with care
They kept from noon's o'erwhelming might
Singing them stories of the Light,
The burden of the lullaby
Being, "All praise to God on high,
Who makes the babes so soft and sweet!"
Sequestered from the heavenly heat

And splendors of the fields of love,
The lady showed me then a grove.
Breathlessly still was part, and part
Was breathing with an easy heart ;
And there below, in lamb-like game,
Were virgins, all so much the same
That each was all. A youth drew nigh,
And gazed on them with dreaming eye,
And would have passed, but that a maid,
Clapping her hands above her, said,
“ My turn is now ! ” and laughing ran
After the dull and strange young man,
And bade him stop and look at her.
And so he called her lovelier
Than any else, only because
She only then before him was.
And, while they stood and gazed, a change
Was seen in both, diversely strange.
The youth was ever more and more
That good which he had been before ;
But the glad maiden grew and grew
Such, that the rest no longer knew
Their sister, who was now to sight
The young man’s self, yet opposite,
As the outer rainbow is the first,
But weaker, and the hues reversed.
And whereas, in the abandoned grove,
The virgin round the central Love

Had blindly circled in her play,
Now danced she round her partner's way;
And, as the earth the moon's, so he
Had the responsibility
Of her diviner motion. "Lo,"
He sang, and the heavens began to glow,
"The pride of personality,
Seeking its highest, aspires to die,
And in unspeakably profound
Humiliation Love is crowned!
And from his exaltation still
Into his ocean of good will
He curiously casts the lead
To find strange depths of lowlihead."

To one same tune, but higher, "Bold,"
The maiden sang, "is Love! For cold
On earth are blushes, and for shame
Of such an ineffectual flame
As ill consumes the sacrifice!"

By the angel led, in such sweet wise,
There did my happy hearing greet
That which she bade me not repeat.
"Truth levelled to the world's low eye,
In heaven," said she, "appears a lie,
And tales of the seraphic sphere
Were scandals in the earth's false ear."
And, following thus the lady, she
Turned oft to gaze and smile on me,

Saying how like I was to one
She knew on earth, more heavenly none.
“And, when you laugh, I see,” she sighed,
“How much he loved her! Many a bride
In heaven such countersemblance bears,
Through what love deemed rejected prayers.”

Suffering a momentary lapse
Earthwards, I thus inquired: “Perhaps
The open glory of the Lord
Will show, as promised in His Word?”
And she replied, “What may you mean?
Nought else in heaven was ever seen!”

She would have shown me more, but then
One of a troop of glorious men,
From some high work, towards her came;
And she so smiled 'twas such a flame
Aaron's twelve jewels seemed to mix
With the lights of the Seven Candlesticks.

MARY CHURCHILL

TO

THE DEAN.

V.—MARY CHURCHILL TO THE DEAN.

FATHER, you bid me once more weigh
This Offer, ere I answer, nay.
Charles does me honor; but 'twere vain
To reconsider now again,
And so to doubt the clear-shown truth
I sought for, and received, when youth,
And vanity, and one whose love
Was lovely, woo'd me to remove
From Heav'n my heart's infixed root.

'Tis easiest to be absolute;
And I reject the name of Bride
From no conceit of saintly pride,
But dreading my infirmity,
And ignorance of how to be
Faithful, at once, to the heavenly life,
And the fond duties of a wife.
I narrow am, and want the art
To love two things with all my heart.
Occupied wholly in His search
Who, in the mysteries of the Church,
Returns, and calls them Clouds of Heaven,
I tread a road straight, hard, and even;
But fear to wander all confused,
By two-fold fealty abused.
I either should the one forget,

Or scanty pay the other's debt ;
For still it seems to me I make
Love vain by adding "for His sake ;"
Nay, at the very thought my breast
Is fill'd with anguish of unrest !

You bade me, Father, count the cost.
I have ! and all that must be lost
I feel as only women can.
To live the Idol of some man,
And through the untender world to move
Wrapt safe in his superior love,
How sweet ! And children, too : ah, there
Lies, if I dared to look, despair !
And the wife's happy, daily round
Of duties, and their narrow bound,
So plain that to transgress were hard,
Yet full of tangible reward ;
Her charities, not marr'd like mine
With fears of thwarting laws divine ;
The world's regards and just delight
In one so clearly, kindly right ;
I've thought of all, and I endure,
Not without sharp regret be sure,
To give up life's glad certainty,
For what, perchance, may never be.
For nothing of my state I know
But that t'ward heaven I seem to go
As one who fondly landward hies
Along a deck that faster flies !

With every year, meantime, some grace
 Of earthly happiness gives place
 To humbling ills ; the very charms
 Of youth being counted henceforth harms ;
 To blush already seems absurd ;
 Nor know I whether I should herd
 With girls or wives, or sadliest balk
 Maids' merriment, or matrons' talk ;
 Nor are men's courtesies her dues
 Who is not good for show nor use !

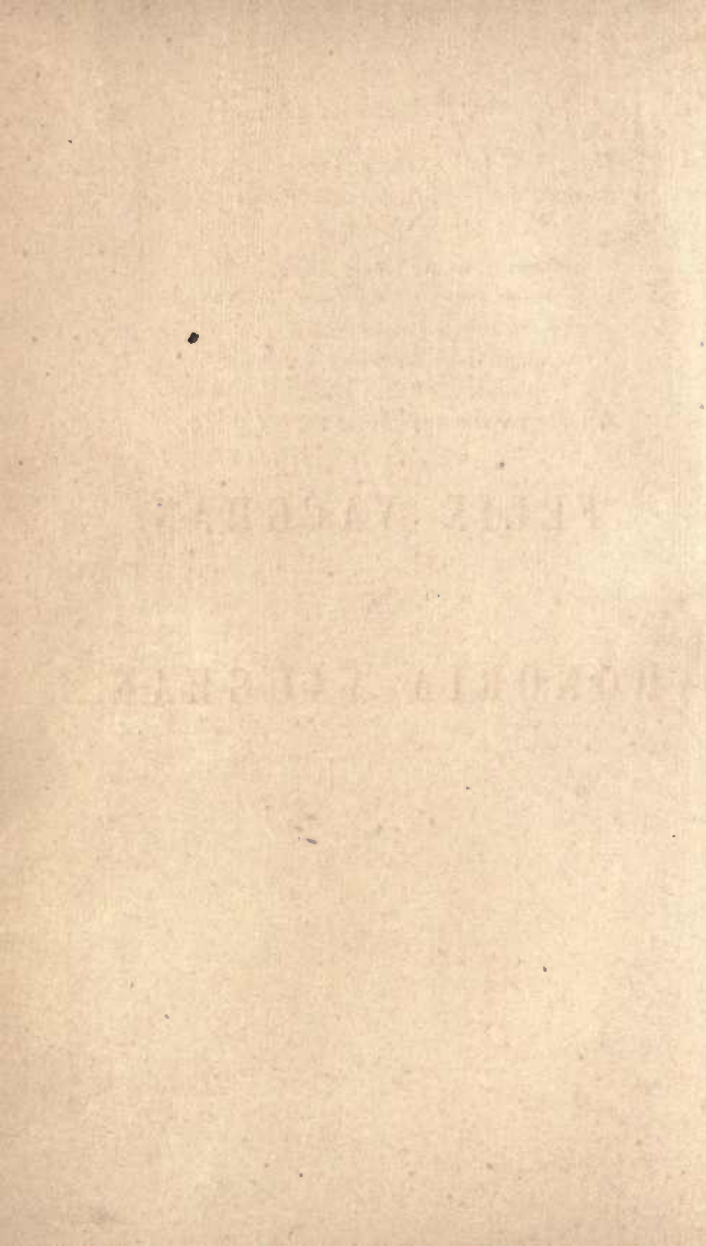
To crown these evils, I confess //
 That faith's terrestrial fruit is less
 In joy and honor sensible
 Than teachers of religion tell.
 The bridal memories of the heart
 Grow weaker, rising far apart.
 My pray'rs will sudden pleasures move,
 And heavenly heights of human love ;
 But, for the general, none the less,
 Sordid and stifling narrowness,
 Or worse vacuity, afflicts
 The soul that much itself addicts
 To sanctity in solitude,
 Or serving the ingratitude
 Of Christ's complete disguise, His Poor.
 Straight is the way, narrow the door,
 Howbeit, that leads to life ! O'er late,
 Besides, 'twere now to change my fate ;
 The world's delight my soul dejects,

Revenging all my disrespects,
Of old, with incapacity
To chime with even its harmless glee,
Which sounds, from fields beyond my range,
Like fairies' music, thin and strange.
With something like remorse, I grant
The world has beauty which I want,
And if, instead of judging it,
I at its Council chance to sit,
Or at its gay and order'd Feast,
My place is lower than the least,
The conscience of the life to be
Smites me with inefficiency,
And makes me all unfit to bless
With comfortable earthliness
The rest-desiring brain of man.
Finally, then, I fix my plan
To dwell with Him that dwells apart
In the highest heaven and lowliest heart.
Nor will I, to my utter loss,
Look to pluck roses from the Cross.

As for the good of human love,
'Twere countercheck almost enough
To think that one must die before
The other! and perhaps 'tis more
In love's last interest to do
Nought the least contrary thereto,
Than to be blest, and be unjust,
Or suffer injustice; as they must,
Without a miracle, whose pact

Compels to intercourse and act
In mutual aim when darkness sleeps
Cold on the spirit's changeful deeps.

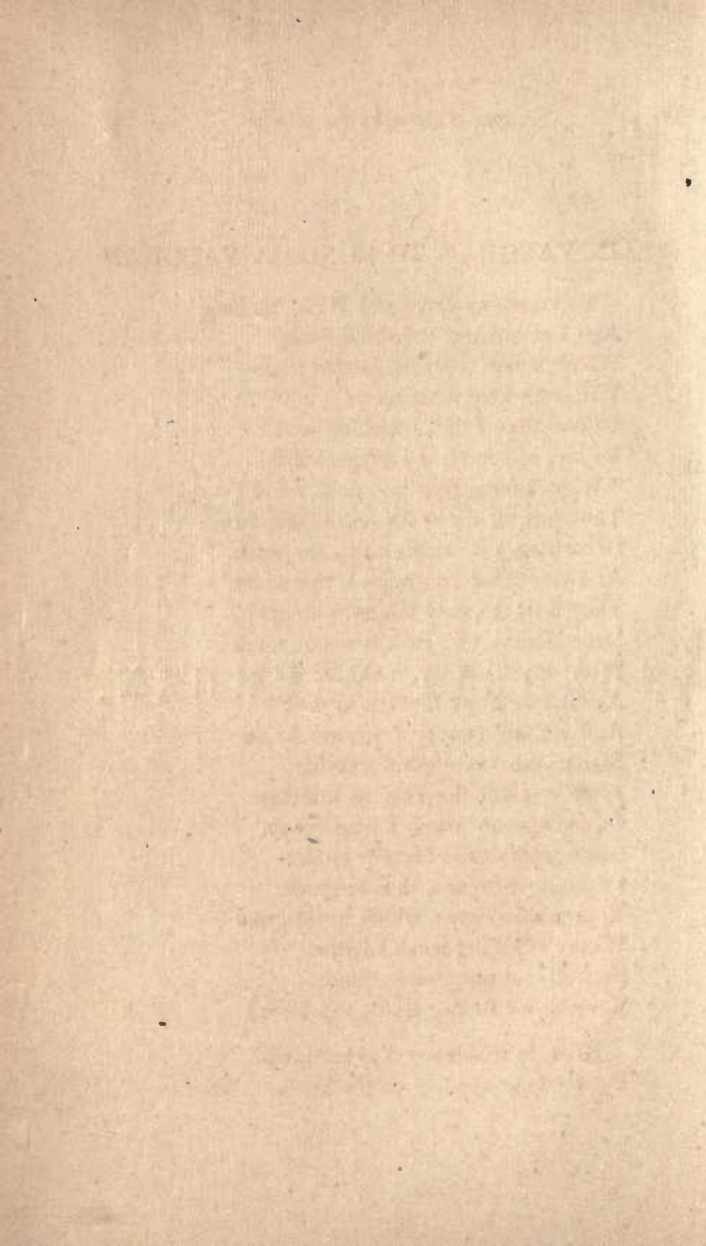
Enough if, to my lonely share,
Fall gleams that keep me from despair.
Happy the things I here discern ;
More happy those for which I yearn,
But measurelessly happy above
All else are those we know not of!



“FELIX VAUGHAN”

“TO”

“HONORIA VAUGHAN.”



FELIX VAUGHAN TO HONORIA VAUGHAN.

DEAREST my Love and Wife, 'tis long
Ago I closed the unfinish'd Song
Which never could be finish'd ; nor
Will ever Poet utter more
Of love than I did, watching well
To lure to speech the unspeakable !
" Why, having won her, do I woo ?"
That final strain to the last height flew
Of written joy, which wants the smile
And voice that are, indeed, the while
They last, the very things you speak,
Dear Honor, who mak'st music weak
With ways that say, " Shall I not be
As kind to all as Heaven to me !"
And yet, ah, twenty times my Bride
Rising, this twentieth festal-tide,
From you soft sleeping, on this day
Of days, some words I long to say,
Some words superfluously sweet
Of fresh assurance, thus to greet
Your waking eyes, which never grow
Weary of telling what I know
So well, yet only well enough
To wish for further news, my Love !

Here, in this latest August dawn,
By windows opening on the lawn,

Where shadows yet are sharp with night,
And sunshine seems asleep, though bright;
And, further on, the wealthy wheat
Bends in a golden drowse, how sweet
To sit, and cast my careless looks
Around my walls of well-read books,
Wherein is all that stands redeem'd
From Time's huge wreck, all men have dream'd
Of truth, and all by poets known
Of feeling, and in weak sort shown,
And, turning to my heart again,
To find therein what makes them vain,
The thanksgiving mind, which wisdom sums,
And you, whereby it freshly comes,
As on that morning, (can there be
Twenty-two years 'twixt it and me?)
When, thrill'd with hopeful love, I rose
And came in haste to Sarum Close,
Past many a homestead slumbering white
In lonely and pathetic light,
Merely to fancy which drawn-blind
Of thirteen had my Love behind,
And in her sacred neighborhood
To feel that sweet scorn of all good
But her, which let the wise forfend
When wisdom learns to comprehend.

Dearest, as each returning May
I see the season new and gay,
With new joy and astonishment,
And Nature's infinite ostent

Of lovely flowers in wood and mead
That weet not whether any heed,
So see I, daily wondering, you,
And worship with a passion new
The Heaven that visibly allows
Its grace to go about my house,
The partial Heaven that, though I err,
And mortal am, gave all to her
Who gave herself to me. Yet I
Boldly thank Heaven, (and so defy
The sackcloth sort of humbleness
Which fears God's bounty to confess,)
That I was fashion'd with a mind
Seeming for this great gift design'd,
So naturally it moved above
All sordid contraries of love,
Strengthen'd in youth with discipline
Of light, to follow the divine
Vision, (which ever to the dark
Is such a plague as was the ark
In Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron,) still
Discerning, with the docile will
Which comes of full-persuaded thought,
That intimacy in love is nought
Without pure reverence, whereas this,
In tearfullest banishment, is bliss.

For which cause, dear Honoria, I
Have never learn'd the weary sigh
Of those that to their love-feasts went,
Fed, and forgot the Sacrament,

And not a trifle now occurs,
But sweet initiation stirs
Of new-discover'd joy, and lends
To feeling change that never ends ;
And duties, which the many irk,
Are made all wages and no work.

How sing of such things save to her,
Love's self, so love's interpreter !
How the supreme rewards confess
Which crown the austere voluptuousness
Of heart, that earns, in midst of wealth,
The appetite of want and health ;
Relinquishes the pomp of life
And beauty to the pleasant wife
At home, and does all joy despise
As out of place but in her eyes ?
And, ah, how tell of love that glows
The lovelier for the fading rose ?
Of weakness which can weight the arm
To lean with thrice its girlish charm ?
Of grace which, like this autumn day,
Is not the sad one of decay,
Yet one whose pale brow pondereth
The far-off majesty of death ?
How tell the crowd, whom passion rends,
That love grows mild as it ascends ?
That joy's most high and distant mood
Is lost, not found, in dancing blood ?
Yet that embraces, kisses, sighs,
And all those fond realities

Which are love's words, in us mean more
Delight than twenty years before ?

Fancy how men would make their mirth
Over an Epic of the Hearth,
Its high, eventful passages
Consisting, say, of scenes like these :—

One morning, contrary to law,
Which, for the most, we held in awe,
Commanding either not to intrude
On the other's place of solitude,
Or solitary mind, for fear
Of coming there when God was near,
And finding so what should be known
To Him who is merciful alone,
And views the working ferment base
Of sleeping flesh and waking grace,
Not as we view, our kindness check'd
By likeness of our own defect,
I, rashly entering her room,
Beauty's at once and Virtue's loom,
Mark'd here, across a careless chair,
A ball-dress flung, as light as air,
And here, beside a silken couch,
Pillows which did the pressure vouch
Of pious knees, (sweet piety!
Of goodness made and charity,
If gay looks told the heart's glad sense,
Much rather than of penitence,)
And, on the couch, an open book,
And written list—I did not look,

Yet just in her clear writing caught :
 " Habitual faults of life and thought
 " Which most I need deliverance from."
 I turn'd aside, and saw her come
 Along the filbert-shaded way,
 Illustrious with her usual gay
 Hypocrisy of perfectness,
 Which made her heart, and mine no less,
 So happy! And she cried to me,
 " You lose by breaking rules, you see !
 " Your treat to-night is now half gone
 " Of seeing my new ball-dress on."
 And meeting so my lovely wife,
 A passing pang to think that life
 Was mortal, when I saw her laugh,
 Shaped in my mind this epitaph :
 " Faults had she, child of Adam's stem,
 " But only Heaven knew of them."

Or thus :

Through female fraud intense,
 Or the good luck of innocence,
 Or both, my wife, with whom I plan
 To spend calm evenings when I can,
 After the chattering girls and boys
 Are gone, or the less grateful noise
 Is over, of grown tongues that chime
 Untruly, once upon a time
 Prevail'd with me to change my mind
 Of reading out how Rosalind

In Arden jested, and to go
Where people, whom I ought to know,
She said, would meet that night. And I
Who thought in secret, "I will try
"Some dish more sharply sauced than this
"Milk-soup men call domestic bliss,"
Took, as she, laughing, bade me take
Our eldest boy's brown Wide-awake
And straw box of cigars, and went
Where, like a careless parliament
Of gods Olympic, six or eight,
Authors and else, reputed great,
Were met in council jocular
On many things, pursuing far
Truth, only for the chace's glow,
Quick as they caught her letting go,
Or, when at fault the view-halloo,
Playing about the missing clue.
And coarse jests came, "But gods are coarse,"
Thought I, yet not without remorse.
While memory of the gentle words,
Wife, mother, sister, flash'd like swords,
And so, after two hours of wit,
That left a hole where'er it hit,
I said I would not stay to sup,
Because my wife was sitting up,
And walk'd home with a sense that I
Was no match for that company.
Smelling of smoke, which, always kind,
Honorina said she did not mind;

I sipp'd her tea, saw baby scold,
 And finger at the muslin fold,
 Through which he push'd his nose at last,
 And choked and chuckled, feeding fast;
 And, he asleep and sent upstairs,
 I rang the servants in to prayers,
 And after told what men of fame
 Had urged 'gainst this and that. "For shame!"
 She said, but argument show'd not.
 "If I had answered thus," I thought,
 "'Twould not have pass'd for very wise.
 "But I have not her voice and eyes!
 "Howe'er it be, I'm glad of home,
 "Yea, very glad at heart to come
 "From clatter of those clever daws,
 "Profaning love, confusing laws,
 "To lean a happy head upon
 "The bosom of my simple swan."

Or thus:

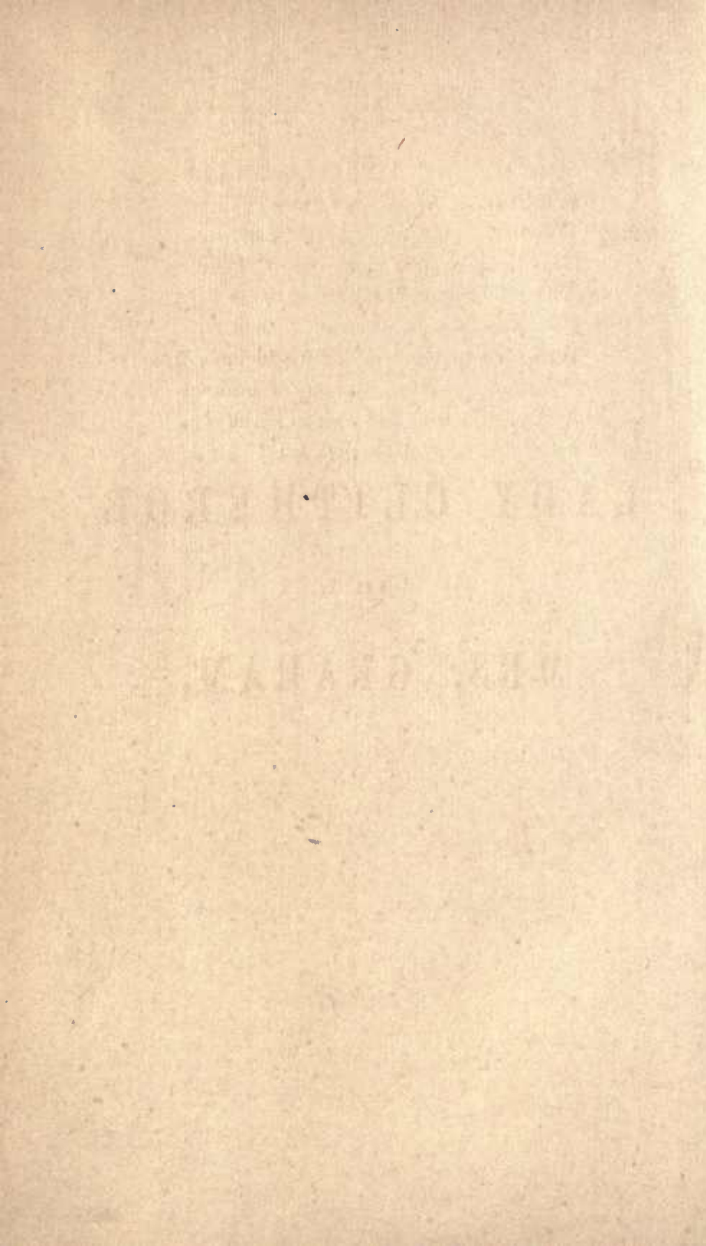
For many a dreadful day,
 In sea-side lodgings sick she lay,
 Noteless of Love, nor seem'd to hear
 The sea, on one side, tumbling near;
 Nor, on the other, the loud ball
 Held nightly in the public hall;
 Nor, vex'd they my short slumbers, though
 I woke up if she breathed too low.
 Thus, for three months, with terrors rife,
 The pending of her precious life

I watch'd o'er; and the danger, at last,
The kind physieian said, was past.
Howbeit, for seven harsh weeks, the East
Breathed witheringly, and Spring's growth ceased.
And so she only did not die;
Until the bright and blighting sky
Changed into cloud, and the sick flowers
Remember'd their perfumes, and showers
Of warm, small rain refreshing flew
Before the South, and the Park grew,
In three nights, thick with green. Then she
Revived no less than flower and tree,
In the mild air, and the fourth day
Look'd supernaturally gay
With large thanksgiving eyes, that shone,
The while I tied her bonnet on,
So that I led her to the glass
And bade her see how fair she was,
And how love visibly could shine.
Profuse of her's, desiring mine,
And mindful I had loved her most
When beauty seem'd a vanish'd boast,
She laugh'd. I press'd her then to me,
Nothing but soft humility;
Nor e'er enhanced she with such charms
Her acquiescence in my arms.
And by her sweet love-weakness made
Courageous, powerful, and glad,
In the superiority
Of heavenly affection I

Perceived that perfect love was all
 The same as to be rational,
 And that the mind and heart thereof,
 Which think they cannot do enough,
 Are truly the everlasting doors
 Wherethrough, all unpetition'd, pours
 The eternal pleasaunce. Wherefore we
 Had innermost tranquillity,
 And breathed one life with such a sense
 Of friendship and of confidence
 That, recollecting the sure word,
 "If two of you are in accord,
 "On earth, as touching any boon
 "Which ye shall ask, it shall be done
 "In heaven," we asked that heaven's bliss
 Might ne'er be any less than this;
 And, for that hour, we seem'd to have
 The secret of the joy we gave.

How sing of such things save to her,
 Love's self, so love's interpreter!
 How read from such a homely page
 In the ear of this unhomely age!
 'Tis now as when the Prophet cried,
 "The Nation hast Thou multiplied,
 "But Thou hast not increased the joy!"
 And yet, ere wrath or rot destroy
 Of England's state the ruin fair,
 O, might I so its charms declare
 That, in new Lands in far-off years,
 Delighted he should cry that hears:

“Great is the Land that somewhat best
“Works to the wonder of the rest!
“We, in our day, have better done
“This thing or that than any one ;
“And who but, still admiring, sees
“How excellent for images
“Was Greece, for laws how wise was Rome :
“But read this Poet, and say if home
“And private love did e’er so smile
“As in that ancient British Isle !”



LADY CLITHEROE

TO

MRS. GRAHAM.

LADY CLITHEROE TO MRS. GRAHAM.

MY DEAREST AUNT, the Wedding-day,
 But for Jane's loss, and you away,
 Was all a Bride from heaven could beg!
 Skies, bluer than the sparrow's egg,
 And clearer than the cuckoo's call;
 And such a sun, the flowers all
 With double ardor seem'd to blow!
 The very daisies were a show,
 Expanded with uncommon pride,
 Like little pictures of the Bride.

Your Great-niece and your Grandson were
 Perfection of a pretty pair.
 John, as from church they came away,
 Seem'd finest part of the fine day;
 And Emily having signed the bond
 By her, sweet Innocence, unconn'd,
 Look'd thenceforth, did she smile or weep,
 Like Love's self walking in his sleep.

How well Honoria's girls turn out,
 Although they never go about!
 Dear me, what trouble and expense
 It took to give mine confidence.
Hers greet mankind, as I've heard say
 That wild things do, where beasts of prey
 Were never known, nor any men
 Have met their fearless eyes till then.

Their grave, inquiring trust to find
 All creatures of their simple kind
 Quite disconcerts bold coxcombry,
 And makes less perfect candor shy.

Bred to their parents' courtly style,
 The trick of an admiring smile
 Is lost ; and flatteries less sincere
 And authorized than theirs, they hear
 Unmoved, like solemn little queens,
 Nor even wonder what it means.

Our Bride was never once from home!
 So, when John carries her to Rome,
 Thereafter she will have a dim
 Idea that Rome is part of him!
 Of course he knows that! Folks may scoff,
 But how your home-kept girls go off!
 Young men, I do find more and more,
 Are not the fools we take them for ;
 And Hymen hastens to unband
 The waist that ne'er felt waltzer's hand.
 At last I see my Sister's right,
 And I've told Maude, this very night,
 (But oh, my daughters have such wills !)
 To knit, and only dance quadrilles.

You say Fred never writes to you
 Frankly, as once he used to do,
 About himself, and you complain
 He shared with none his grief for Jane.
 Ah, dear Aunt, that's the way with men.
 I've often noticed it! But then

It all comes of the foolish fright
They're in at the word, hypocrite.
Sooner than inconsistent seem,
I've heard a young male Saint blaspheme !
And though, when first in love, sometimes
They rave in letters, talk, and rhymes,
When once they find, as find they must,
How hard 'tis to be hourly just
To those they love, they are dumb for shame,
Where we, you see, rave on the same.
And his reserve, perhaps, is none
The less that Jane is dead and gone.

Honoriam, to whose heart alone
He seems to open all his own,
At times has tears in her kind eyes
After their private colloquies.
I should have fancied, but for this,
That time had heal'd that grief of his.
Frederick's was not a lively way
Ever, but ne'er more nearly gay.
The Vaughans have had his children here
The best part of the mourning-year,
And he comes with them, when he can.
I think I never knew a man
So popular ! Howbeit he moves
My spleen by his impartial loves.
He's happy from some inner spring,
Depending not on anything.
Petting our Polly, none e're smiled
More fondly on his favorite child ;

Yet, playing with his own, it is
 With smiles as if it were not his !
 He means to go again to sea,
 Now that the wedding's over. " He
 " And his two babies can't be nurst
 " Of course for ever at the Hurst,"
 He says to Vaughan, (who, all his life,
 Has loved the lovers of his wife ;)
 And, having been so used to roam,
 He finds that, by himself, at home
 There's scarcely space to breathe. Then, soon
 After the finished honeymoon,
 He'll give to Emily and John
 The little ones to practice on ;
 And major-domo Mrs. Rouse,
 A dear old soul from Ashfield House,
 Will scold the housemaids and the cook,
 Till Emily has learn'd to look
 A little braver than a lamb
 Surprised by dogs without its dam !

Do, dear Aunt, use your influence,
 And try to put some good plain sense
 Into my sister Mary, who
 I hear intends to visit you
 This Autumn. 'Tis not yet too late
 To make her change her chosen state
 Of single foolishness. In truth,
 I fancy that, with fading youth,
 Her own will wavers ! Yesterday,
 Though, till the Bride was gone away,

Joy shone from Mary's loving heart,
I found her afterwards apart,
Hysterically sobbing : I
Knew much too well to ask her why.
This marrying of Nieces daunts
The bravest souls of Maiden Aunts.
Though sister's children often blend
Sweetly the bonds of Child and Friend,
They are but reeds to rest upon.
When Emily comes back with John,
Her right to go down stairs before
Aunt Mary will but be the more
Observed if kindly waived, and how
Shall these be as they were, when now
Niece has her John, and Aunt the sense
Of her superior innocence !
Somehow, all loves, however fond,
Prove lieges of the nuptial bond ;
And she who dares at this to scoff,
Finds all the rest, in time, drop off ;
While marriage, like a mushroom-ring,
Spreads its sure circle every Spring.

She twice refused George Vane, you know ;
Yet, when he died three years ago
In the Indian war she put on gray,
And wears no colors to this day.
And she it is who charges *me*,
Dear Aunt, with inconsistency !

You heard we lost poor Mr. Vere.
Mary's pet Parson now is here,

Who preaches, morn and evening too,
On worldiness, towards my pew.
I daren't think "Nonsense!" though I've tried,
Because the Devil's on his side.
Now dear Papa goes murmuring on,
"Love one another!" like Saint John.
What happens if we disobey
He will not positively say;
Which leaves, you see, the advantage quite
With him who puts one in a fright.

LADY CLITHEROE TO EMILY GRAHAM.

MY DEAREST NIECE, I'm glad to hear
The scenery's fine at Windermere,
And charm'd a six weeks' wife defers
In the least to wisdom not yet hers.
But, Child, I've no advice to give!
Rules do but make it hard to live.
And where's the good of having been
Well-taught from seven to seventeen,
If, married, you may not leave off
At last, and say, "I'm good enough!"
Neglect your mind! Folly's to that,
What, to the figure, is the fat.
We know, however wise by rule,
Woman is still by nature fool;
And men have sense to like her all
The more when she is natural.
'Tis true that, if we choose, we can
Mock to a miracle the man;
But iron in the fire red-hot,
Though 'tis the heat, the fire 'tis not.
And who, for a mere sham, would pledge
The babe's and woman's privilege:
No duties and a thousand rights?
Besides, defect love's flow incites,
As water in a well will come
Only the while 'tis drawn therefrom.

“*Point de culte sans mystere,*” you say,
“And what if that should die away?”
Child, never fear that either could
Pull from Saint Cupid’s face the hood!
The follies natural to each
Surpass the other’s mental reach.
Just think how men, with sword and gun,
Will really fight and never run;
And all in jest; for they’d have died,
For sixpence more, on the other side!
A woman’s heart must ever warm
At such odd ways; and, so, we charm
By strangeness which, the more they mark,
The more men get into the dark.
The marvel, by familiar life,
Grows, and attaches to the wife,
By whom it grows. Thus, silly Girl,
To John you’ll always be the pearl
In the oyster of the universe;
And though, in time, he’ll treat you worse,
He’ll love you more, you need not doubt,
And never, never find you out!
Not that I’d have you e’er let fall
A decent ceremonial;
But only don’t be cowardly,
And half afraid to eat, if he
Is looking. As ’tis own’d by men
They never were so blest as when
They paid us their attentions, ’twill
Be wise to make John pay them still.

The proper study of mankind
Is woman ; for an idle mind
Calls simple what the studious well
Perceives to be inscrutable.

My Dear, I know that dreadful thought
That you've been kinder than you ought !
You almost hate him ! But, my Pet,
'Tis wonderful how men forget,
And how a merciful Providence
Deprives our husbands of all sense
Of kindness past, and makes them deem
We always were what now we seem !
For their own sakes, we must, you know,
However plain the way we go,
Still make it strange with stratagem,
And instinct tells us that, to them,
It's always right to bate their price.
Yet I must say they're rather nice,
And, oh, so easily taken in,
To cheat them almost seems a sin !
If a wife cries, a man thinks this
Really shows something is amiss !
And, Dearest, 'twould be most unfair
T'ward John, your feelings to compare
With his or any man's ; for she
Who loves at all loves always, he
Who loves far more, loves yet by fits,
And when the wayward wind remits
To blow, his feelings faint and drop,
Like forge-flames when the bellows stop.

Such things don't trouble you at all
 When once you know they're natural!
 And as for getting old, my Dear,
 If you're but prudent, year by year
 He'll find some far-fetch'd cause the more
 To think you sweeter than before!
 My birth-day (for an instance take),
 As I was looking in the Lake,
 Studious if black would best subdue
 The red in my nose, or black with blue;
 Your Uncle, in his loftiest mode,
 Assured me that my face ne'er glow'd
 With such a handsome health! And yet,
 As you, I doubt not, know, my Pet,
 Albeit we never quarrel, we
 Maltreat each other constantly!
 And, by the way, this is a fact
 On which in season you may act:
 Where two are all, 'tis hard for half
 To fight! He, when I scold, will laugh
 Till I laugh with him. If 'tis I
 Am scolded, I have but to cry.
 Talk breaks no bones, if only one
 Waits till the other has quite done.

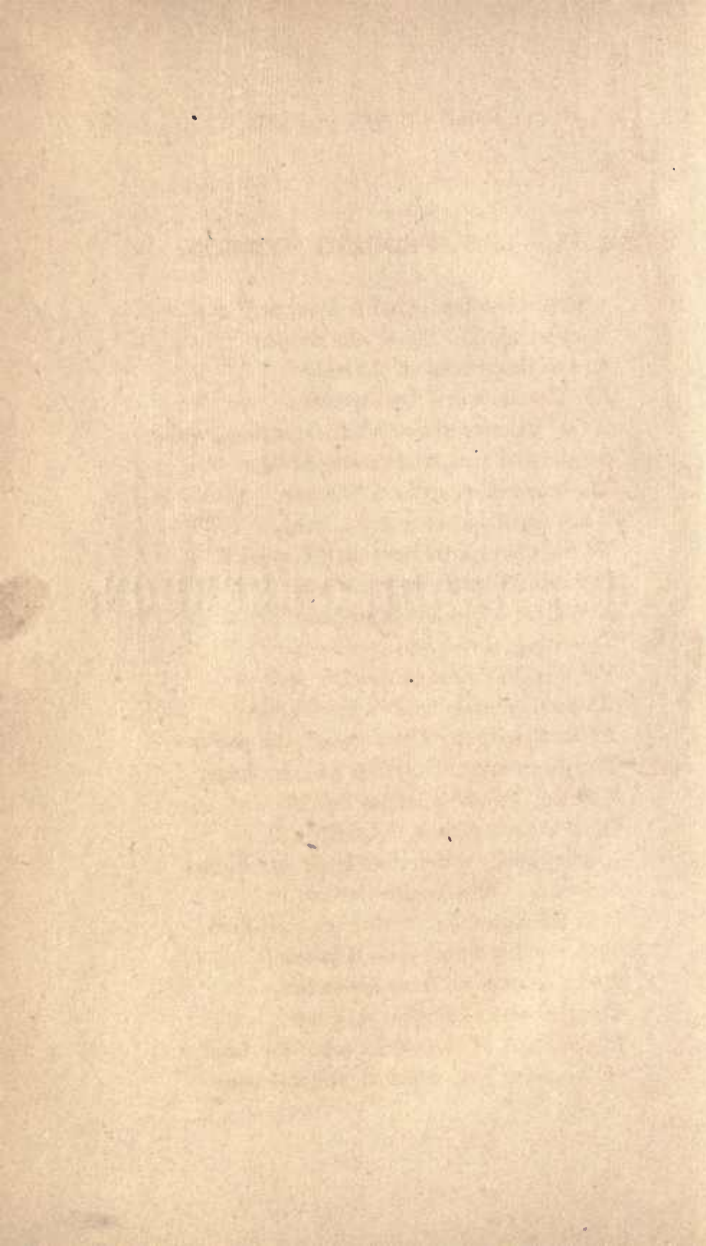
My love to John! And pray, my Dear,
 Don't let me see you for a year;
 Unless, indeed, ere then you've learn'd
 That Beauties, wed, are blossoms turn'd
 To unripe codlings, meant to dwell
 In modest shadow hidden well,

Till this green stage again permute
To glow of flowers, with good of fruit.
I will not have my patience tried
By your absurd, new-married pride,
That scorns the world's slow gather'd sense ;
Ties up the hands of Providence ;
Rules babes, before there's hope of one,
Better than mothers e'er have done ;
And, for your poor particular,
Neglects delights and graces far
Beyond your crude and thin conceit.
Age has romance almost as sweet,
And much more generous than this
Of your's and John's ! With all the bliss
Of the evenings when you coo'd with him,
And upset home for your sole whim,
You might have envied, were you wise,
The tears within your Mother's eyes,
Which, I dare say, you did not see.
But let that pass ! Your's yet will be,
I hope, as happy, kind, and true
As lives which now seem void to you.
Have you not seen house-painters paste
Their gold in sheets, then rub to waste
Full half, and, lo, you read the name ?
Well, Time, my Dear, does much the same
With this unmeaning glare of love.

But, though you yet may much improve,
In marriage be it still confess'd
There's not much merit at the best.

Some half-a-dozen lives, indeed,
Which else would not have had the need,
Get food and nurture, as the price
Of ante-dated Paradise ;
But what's that to the varied want
Succor'd by Mary, your dear Aunt,
Who put the bridal crown thrice by,
For that of which virginity,
So used, has hope. She sends her love,
As usual with a proof thereof —
Papa's Discourse, which you, no doubt,
Heard none of, neatly copied out
Whilst we were dancing. All are well.
Adieu, for there's the Luncheon Bell.

THE WEDDING SERMON.



IX.—THE WEDDING SERMON.

DEAR children, God is love, and love
Is everything. The truths thereof
Are as the waters of the sea
For clearness and for mystery.

Of that sweet love which, startling, wakes
Senses and soul, and mostly breaks
The word of promise to the ear,
But keeps it, after many a year,
To the true spirit, how shall I speak?
My memory with age is weak,
And I for hopes do oft suspect
The things I seem to recollect.
Yet who but must remember well
'Twas this made heaven intelligible
As motive, though 'twas small the power
The heart might have, for even an hour,
To hold possession of its height
Of nameless pathos and delight!

That good, which does itself not know,
Scarce is. Old families are so,
Less through their coming of good kind,
Than having borne it well in mind,
And this does all from honor bar,
The ignorance of what they are!
In the heart of the world, alas, for want
Of knowing that which light souls taunt

As lightness, and which God has made
Such that, for even its feeble shade,
Evoked by falsely fair ostents
And soiling of its sacraments,
Great Statesmen, Poets, Warriors, Kings,
(The World's Beloved,) all other things
Gladly having counted nothing, what
Fell fires of Tophet burn forgot!

In Godhead rise, thither flow back
All loves, which, as they keep or lack
The appointed course and bound assigned,
Are virtue or sin. Love's every kind,
Lofty or low, of spirit or sense,
Desire is or Benevolence.

He who is fairer, better, higher
Than all His works, claims all Desire,
And, in His Poor, His Proxies, asks
Our whole Benevolence. He tasks,
Howbeit, His People by their powers;
And if, my children, you, for hours
Daily, untortured in the heart,
Can worship, and time's other part
Give, without rough recoils of sense,
To claims ingrate of indigence,
Happy are you, and fit to be
Wrought to rare heights of sanctity,
For the humble to grow humbler at.
But if the flying spirit falls flat,
After the modest spell of prayer
That saves the day from sin and care,

And the upward eye a void descries,
And praises are hyprocrisies,
And, in the soul, o'erstrain'd for grace,
A godless anguish grows apace ;
Or if impartial charity
Seems in the act a sordid lie,
Do not infer you cannot please
God, or that He his promises
Postpones, but be content to love
No more than He accounts enough,
Leaving Christ's right and left in heaven
To be to them, unenvied, given
For whom it is prepared. Let us,
Who are but babes in Christ, think thus
(Admiring them whose skill it suits
To adore, unscath'd, God's attributes),
That all ambition bears a curse ;
And none, if height metes error, worse
Than his who sets his hope on more
Godliness than God made him for.
At least, leave distant worlds alone
Till you are native to your own !
Account them poor enough who want
Any good thing which you can grant,
And fathom first the depths of life
In dues of Husband and of Wife,
Child, Mother, Father : simple keys
To many Bible mysteries !

The love of marriage claims, above
All special kinds, the name of Love,

As being, though not so saintly high
As what seeks Heaven with single eye,
Sole perfect. Equal and entire,
Therein, Benevolence, Desire,
Elsewhere ill-joined, or found apart,
Become the pulses of one heart,
Which now contracts and now dilates,
And, each to the height exalting, mates
Self-seeking to self-sacrifice.
Nay, in its subtle paradise
(When purest), this one love unites
All modes of these two opposites,
All balanced in accord so rich
Who may determine which is which?
Chiefly God's love does in it live,
And nowhere else so sensitive ;
For each is all the other's eye,
In the vague vast of Deity,
Can comprehend and so contain
As still to touch and ne'er to strain
The fragile nerves of joy. And, then,
'Tis such a wise goodwill to men
And politic economy
As in a prosperous state we see,
Where every plot of common land
Is yielded to some private hand
To fence about and cultivate.
Does narrowness its praise abate?
Nay, if a brook its banks o'erpass
'Tis not a sea, but a morass ;

And the infinite of man is found
But in the beating of its bound.

The Word of God alone can lure
Belief to the snowy tops obscure
Of marriage truth. What wildest guess
Of love's most innocent loftiness
Ere dared to dream of its own height,
Till that bold sun-gleam quenched the night,
Showing Heaven's chosen symbol where
The torch of Psyche flash'd despair ;
Proclaiming love, in things divine,
Still to be male and feminine ;
Foretelling, in the Song of Songs,
Which time makes clear as it prolongs,
Christ's nuptials with the Church, (far more,
My children, than a metaphor !)
And still, by names of Bride and Wife,
Husband and Bridegroom, heav'n's own life
Picturing, so proving their's to be
The Earth's unearthliest sanctity.

But, dear my children, heights are heights
And hardly scaled. The best delights
Of even this homeliest passion are
In the most perfect souls so rare,
That they who feel them are as men
Sailing the Southern Ocean, when,
At midnight, they look up and eye
The starry Cross and a strange sky
Of brighter stars, and sad thoughts come
To each how far he is from home.

God's Truth, when most it thwarts our wills
In show, then most in fact fulfils.
Love's nuptial highest, wherefore, see
In the doctrine of virginity !
For what's the virgin's special crown
But that which Love in faith lays down,
Transmuted, without shade of loss,
By the mere contact of the Cross,
To what love nuptial oft makes vow
With sighs to be, but knows not how !
Could lovers, at their dear wish, blend,
'Twould kill the bliss which they intend :
For joy is love's obedience
Against the law of natural sense ;
And those perpetual yearnings sweet
Of lives which fancy they can meet
Are given that lovers never may
Be without costly gifts to lay
On the high altar of true love
In hours of vestal joy. Men move,
Frantic, like comets, to their bliss,
Forgetting that they always miss ;
And this perpetual, fond mistake,
Which love will ne'er learn not to make,
On earth, to seek and fly the sun
By turns, around which love should run,
Perverts the ineffable delight
Of service guerdon'd with full sight,
And pathos of a hopeless want,
To an unreal victory's vaunt

And plaint of an unreal defeat,
Languor and passion.

Misconceit

May also be of vestal life.
The Virgin's self was Joseph's Wife,
And bridal promises are still
The goal that glads the virgin will,
Whose nature doth indeed subsist
There where the outward forms are miss'd,
In all who learn and keep the sense
Divine of "due benevolence,"
Seeking for aye, without alloy
Of selfishness, another's joy,
And finding, in degrees unknown,
That which in act they shunned, their own;
For all delights of earthly love
Are shadows of the heavens, and move
As other shadows do : they flee
From him that follows them, and he
Who flies, for ever finds his feet
Embraced by their pursuings sweet.

But each must learn that Christ's Cross is
Safety, ere he can find it bliss.
The powers that nature's powers can stem
Must come to us, not we to them.
The heavenward soul no measure keeps,
But, lark-like, soars by wayward leaps ;
And highest achievements here befall,
As elsewhere, expectations small.
Then, even in love humane, do I
Not counsel aspirations high,

So much as sweet and regular
 Use of the good in which we are.
 As when a man along the ways
 Walks, and a sudden music plays,
 His step unchanged, he steps in time,
 So let your grace with Nature chime,
 Her primal forces burst like straws
 The bonds of uncongenial laws,
 And those who conquer her are they
 Who comprehend her and obey ;
 Which let your one ambition be ;
 For pride of soaring sanctity
 Revolts to hell ; and that which needs
 The worlds high places, and succeeds,
 Suffers as if a level shock'd
 The upstepping foot. Be ye not mock'd :
 Right life is glad as well as just,
 And, rooted strong in " This I must,"
 It bears aloft the blossom gay
 And zephyr-toss'd, of " This I may ;"
 Whereby the complex heavens rejoice
 In fruits of uncommanded choice.

This still observe : seeking delight,
 Esteem success the test of right ;
 For 'gainst God's will much may be done
 But nought enjoy'd, and pleasures none
 Exist, but, like to springs of steel,
 Active no longer than they feel
 The checks that make them serve the soul,
 They get their vigor from control.

Wherefore, dear children, keep but well
The Church's indispensable
First precepts, and she then allows,
Nay, bids a man leave, for his spouse,
Even his heavenly Father's awe,
At times, and her, his Mother's law,
Construed in its extremer sense.
Jehovah's mild magnipotence
Smiles to behold His children play
In their own free and childish way,
And can His fullest praise descry
In their exuberant liberty.

Happy who in their lives are seen
At all times in the golden mean,
Who, having learn'd and understood
The glory of the central good,
And how souls ne'er may match or merge
But as they thitherward converge,
Nor loves outlast the thorn's brief flame,
Unless God burns within the same,
Can yet, with no proud disesteem
Of mortal love's prophetic dream,
Take, in its innocent pleasures, part,
With infantine, untroubled heart,
And faith that oft t'ward heav'n's far Spring,
Sleeps, like the swallow, on the wing.

Of wedlock's perils all the worst
By ignorance are bred and nurst.
Lovers, once married, deem their bond
Then perfect, scanning nought beyond

For love to do but to sustain
The spousal hour's completed gain.
But time and a right life alone
Fulfil what is that hour foreshown.
The Bridegroom and the Bride withal
Are but unwrought material
Of marriage ; nay, so far is love,
Thus crown'd, from being thereto enough,
Without the long, compulsive awe
Of duty, that the bond of law
Does oftener marriage love evoke,
Than love, which does not wear the yoke
Of legal vows, submits to be
Self-rein'd from ruinous liberty.
Lovely is love ; but age well knows
'Twas law which kept the lover's vows
Inviolate through the year or years
Of worship pieced with panic fears,
When she who lay within his breast
Seem'd of all women perhaps the best,
But not the whole, of womankind,
And love, in his yet wayward mind,
Had ghastly doubts its precious life
Was pledged for aye to the wrong wife.

Could it be else ? A youth pursues
A maid, whom chance, not he, did choose,
Till to his strange arms hurries she
In a despair of modesty.
Then simply, and without pretence
Of insight or experience,

They plight their vows. The parents say,
“ We cannot speak them yea or nay ;
“ The thing proceedeth from the Lord ! ”
And wisdom still approves their word ;
For God created so these two
They match as well as others do
That take more pains, and trust Him less
Who rarely fails, if ask'd to bless
His children's hopeless ignorance,
And blind election of life's chance.
Verily, choice not matters much,
If but the woman's truly such,
And the young man has led the life
Without which how shall e'er the wife
Be the one woman in the world ?
Love's sensitive tendrils sicken, curl'd
Round Folly's former stay ; for 'tis
The doom of an unsanction'd bliss
To mock some good that, gain'd, keeps still
The taint of the rejected ill.

Howbeit, tho' both be true, that she
Of whom the maid was prophecy
As yet lives not, and Love rebels
Against the law of any else ;
And as a steed takes blind alarm,
Disowns the rein, and hunts his harm,
So, misdespairing word and act
May now perturb the happiest pact.
The more, indeed, is love, the more
Peril to love is now in store.

Against it, nothing can be done
 But only this : leave ill alone !
 Who tries to mend his wife succeeds
 As he who knows not what he needs.
 He much affronts a worth as high
 As his, and that equality
 Of spirits in which abide the grace
 And joy of her subjected place ;
 And does the still growth check and blur
 Of contraries, confusing her
 Who better knows what he desires
 Than he, and to that mark aspires
 With perfect zeal, and a deep wit
 Which nothing helps but faith in it.

So, handsomely ignoring all
 In which love's promise short may fall
 Of full performance, honor that,
 As won, which aye love worketh at !
 It is but as the pedigree
 Of perfectness which is to be
 That mortal good can honor claim ;
 Yet honor here to scant were shame
 And robbery ; for it is the mould
 Wherein to beauty runs the gold
 Of good intention, and the stay
 That leads aloft the ivy stray
 Of human sensibilities.

Such honor, with a conduct wise
 In common things, as, not to steep
 The lofty mind of love in sleep

Of overmuch familiarness ;
Not to degrade its kind caress
As those do that can feel no more,
So give themselves to pleasures o'er
Not to let morning-sloth destroy
The evening-flower, domestic joy ;
Not by uxoriousness to chill
The frank devotion of her will
Who can but half her love confer
On him that cares for nought but her :
These, and like obvious prudencies
Observed, he's safest that relies,
For the hope she will not always seem,
Caught, but a laurel or a stream,
On time ; on her unsearchable
Love-wisdom ; on their work done well,
Discreet with mutual aid ; on might
Of shared affliction and delight ;
On much whereof hearts keep account,
Though heads forget ; on babes, chief fount
Of union, and for which babes are
No less than this for them, nay far
More, for the bond of man and wife
To the very verge of future life
Strengthens, and yearns for brighter day
While others, with their use, decay,
And, though love-nuptial purpose keeps
Of offspring, as the centre sleeps
Within the wheel, transmitting thence
Fury to the circumference,

Love's self the noblest offspring is
And sanction of the nuptial kiss ;
Lastly, on either's primal curse,
Which health and sympathy reverse
To blessings.

God, who may be well
Jealous of His chief miracle,
Bids sleep the meddling soul of man,
Through the long process of this plan,
Whereby, from his unweeting side,
The wife's created, and the bride,
That chance one of her strange, sweet sex,
He to His glad life did annex,
Grows, more and more, by day and night,
The one in the whole world opposite
Of him, and in her nature all
So suited and reciprocal
To his especial form of sense,
Affection and intelligence,
That, whereas, in its earlier day,
The least flaw threaten'd love's decay,
No clime could now, on either's part,
Do more than make the other start,
And, full of pity, say, " It is
" I, somehow I, who have done this ;"
And, whereas love at first had strange
Relapses into taste for change,
It now finds (wondrous this, but true !)
The long-accustom'd only new,

And the untried common ; and, whereas
An equal seeming danger was
Of likeness lacking joy and force,
Or difference reaching to divorce,
Now can the finished lover see
Marvel of me most far from me,
Whom, without pride, he may admire,
Without Narcissus' doom, desire,
Serve without selfishness, and love
"Even as himself," in sense above
Niggard "as much," yea, as she is
The only part of him that's his.

I do not say Love's youth returns ;
Love's youth which so divinely yearns !
But just esteem of present good
Shows all regret such gratitude
As if the sparrow in her nest,
Her woolly young beneath her breast,
Should these despise, and sorrow for
Her five blue eggs that are no more.
Nor say, the fruit has quite the scope
Of the flower's spiritual hope.
Love's best is service, and of this
Howe'er devout, use dulls the bliss.
Though love is all of earth that's dear,
Its home, my children, is not here.
The pathos of eternity
Does in its fullest pleasure sigh.
Be grateful and most glad thereof.
Parting, as 'tis, is pain enough.

If love, by joy, has learn'd to give
Praise with the nature sensitive,
At last, to God, we then possess
The end of mortal happiness,
And henceforth very well may wait
The unbarring of the golden gate
Wherethrough, already, faith can see
That apter to each wish than we
Is God, and curious to bless
Better than we devise or guess ;
Not without condescending craft
To disappoint with joy, and waft
Our vessels frail, when worst He mocks
The sight with breakers and with rocks,
To happiest havens. You have heard
Your bond death-sentenced by His Word.
What if, in heaven, the name be o'er,
Because the thing is so much more ?
All are, 'tis writ, as angels there ;
Nor male nor female. Each a stair
In the hierarchical ascent
Of active and recipient
Affections ; what if all are both
By turn, as they themselves betroth
To adoring what is next above,
Or serving what's below their love ?
Of this we are certified, that we
Are shaped here for eternity,
So that a careless word will make
Its dint upon the form we take

Forever. If, then, years have wrought
Two strangers to become, in thought,
Will, and affection, but one man
For likeness, as none others can
Without like process, shall this tree,
The king of all the forest, be,
Alas, the only one of all
That shall not lie where it doth fall?
Shall this most quenchless flame, here nurst
By everything, yea, when revers'd,
Blazing, like torch, the brighter, wink,
Flicker, and into nothing shrink,
When all else burns baleful or brave
In the keen air beyond the grave,
The air love gasps for, sickening here
Out of its native atmosphere?

It cannot be! The Scriptures tell
Only what's inexpressible,
And, 'gainst each word, to make it right,
Themselves propound the opposite.
Beware; for fiends in triumph laugh
O'er him who learns the truth by half!
Beware; for God will not endure
For men to make their hope more pure
Than His good promise, or require
Another than the five-string'd lyre
Which He has vow'd again to the hands
Of whomsoever understands
To tune it justly here! Beware
The Powers and Princedoms of the Air,

Which make of none effect man's hope,
Bepraising heaven's ethereal cope,
But covering with their cloudy cant
Its counterpoising adamant,
Which strengthens ether for the flight
Of angels, makes and measures height,
And in materiality *W. Laro.*
Exceeds our Earth's in like degree
As all else Earth exceeds. Do I
Here utter aught that's dark or high?
Have you not seen a bird's beak slay
Proud Psyche, on summer's day?
Down fluttering drop the frail wings four,
Wanting the weight that made them soar!
Spirit is heavy Nature's wing,
And is not rightly anything
Without its burthen, whereas this,
Wingless, at least a maggot is,
And, wing'd, is honor and delight
Increasing endlessly with height.

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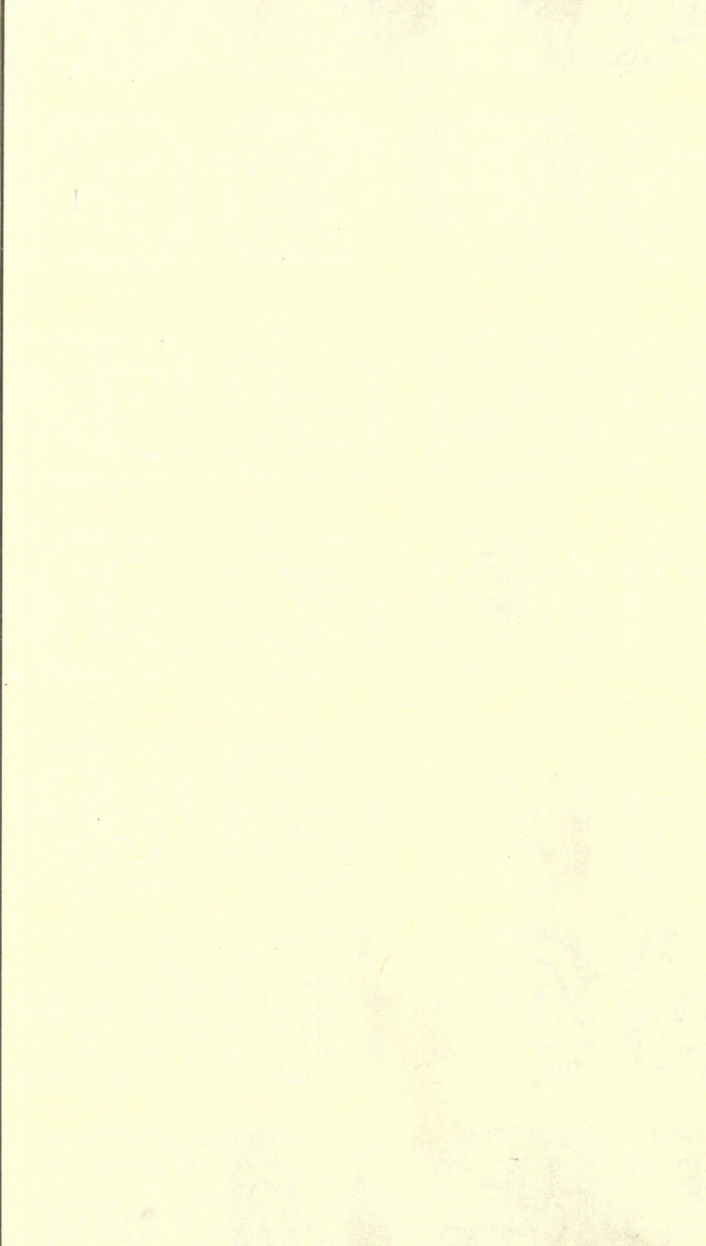
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